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UNCLAS HARARE 001851

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IRAQ; HARARE

1. Under headline "U.S., UK obsession with Hussein only makes him more popular" the August 12 edition of the independent daily "The Daily News" carried the following op-ed by Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem on page 6:

2. ". . . There is a kind of immoral resignation that George W. Bush wants a war in Iraq and he is going to get one by hook or crook. . . As bad boys go, Saddam Hussein may have no rival in recent years in terms of his brutality against his people and willingness to sacrifice their lives at whim. But is it the responsibility of the American Government to change the government of another country? And so brazenly? If they succeed in Iraq, where next? For more than a decade the people of Iraq have been severely punished and stripped of all dignity through punitive sanctions that were meant to remove Saddam, but have obviously neither touched him nor the apparatus of his rule. When would the U.S. and Britain learn a very simple truth that starved and starving people do not rise? They are too busy looking for what to keep body and soul together. Indeed, their obsession with Saddam has only served to make him more popular.

"The fact that they are aiding and abetting all kinds of opposition groups with the expressed aim of dislodging Saddam from power only makes people more suspicious and alienates the masses from the Washington-friendly leaders. Leaders handpicked by Washington and London are never going to be credible to ordinary Iraqis. In any case, even Saddam himself used to be a darling of Washington and look where it has led them. Why should they trust another import from the Yankees. . . ? If Saddam is to be removed from power because he has refused to allow U.N. inspectors back in Iraq and obstructed the implementation of U.N. resolutions, what would the U.S. do to Sharon who bombs and massacres refugees in U.N. High Commission for Refugees camps or Israel that continues to defy U.N. resolutions since its creation?

"How can the U.S. that defies global morality, international consensus and multilateral agreements and actively subverts the U.N. when it suits its purposes be willing to go to war for the sake of U.N. resolutions? The U.S. is a rogue state and cannot be the guarantor of international morality and legality. And as hard as U.S. intelligence, diplomats and other snoopers have tried since 11 September, they have not been able to link Saddam to the al Qaeda network, yet Bush continues to accuse him of terrorism. . . This war is not only immoral or illegal; it is patently unjust. If the U. S. and Britain are allowed to get away with it again, it will be an act of appeasement and capitulation to the militarist dictum: 'Might is right.'"

SULLIVAN